Farm Mission

THE WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Moves Forward

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--In these Times

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What Is the Answer?

What is the answer to the devastating forces of evil which are so evident in our day?

There may be many good answers, but one of the most basic is *more and better Christian religious education.* If the Christian forces of the world will teach Christ to the people of the world, peace will prevail and righteousness will reign. But without the Christian religion, where will there be true righteousness, and when will there be lasting peace?

Much is already being done. There are around the world over 37,000,000 pupils in more than 360,000 Sunday schools, thousands of children in daily vacation Bible schools, thousands of young people in young people's societies, and other thousands in other agencies of Christian nurture. But these are not enough, and the teaching must be improved.

It is the happy task of the World's Sunday School Association to help in extending and improving Christian religious education throughout all lands. It has been at this work for fifty years, and today it pushes forward to new and greater achievements.

At the outbreak of war in Europe in September, 1939, the World's Association did not sit helplessly down to await the war's end. Instead through its North American Administrative Committee, it began with especial care to plan its program for the years ahead.

The decision to plan carefully for the future was put at once into action. Studies were outlined, and helpful data were gathered. An enlarged meeting of the North American Committee, with twenty countries represented, was held at Lake Mohonk, N. Y., in May, 1940. On the basis of the proposals from that meeting, a small committee formulated in broad outline a fundamental program for continuing to extend and improve Christian religious education throughout the world. These steps were taken in 1940, a year of world-shaking international conflict. For that reason, an effort was made to plan a program which is basic and far-reaching in character, and of value regardless of the world-wide changes which may impend. At the same time provision is included for temporary emphases and efforts of a special nature when occasion demands.

It is this program which is described in the following pages.

The Purpose of the Association

The stated purpose of the Association is "to promote Christian education, including organized Sunday-school work, to encourage the study of the Bible, to assist in the spread of the Christian religion, and to develop Christian character throughout the world."

Christian religious education is interested in the preparation of persons for commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord, and in lifelong nurture of these persons so that their faith and practice will be continuously deepened and widened to the end that all their relationships may be truly Christian. With this concept, Christian religious education is indispensable in world evangelization.

The World's Sunday School Association began as a movement for the extension of Sunday schools; and the Sunday schools of the world retain a primary place in the program of all its constituent bodies. But increasingly the concern of all these bodies has broadened to take account of the entire range of factors and agencies involved in Christian religious education.

The actual programs of the constituent units of the World's Sunday School Association vary greatly as is proper to a movement that seeks everywhere to be indigenous. But the movement as a whole, or through some of its units, is concerned not only with the promotion and improvement of Sunday schools, but with Christian religious education through such means and agencies as the following: the family; schools and colleges; youth organizations; daily vacation Bible schools; weekday schools of religion; Christian literature; visual aids; the radio; and whatever other means may be employed for the teaching and learning of Christian truth and the Christian way of life.

The Association is concerned particularly that the Christian church should everywhere conceive its life and work in terms of the Christian religious education of young and old—children, young people and adults—and that there should be effective plans for education in Christian service. It senses the need for education with reference to such problems as the evils of beverage alcohol, the nonmedicinal use of narcotics, international relations, and relations among races. It is opposed to secularism in education and vitally interested in religious freedom.

In all these objects and interests, it seeks to stimulate and cooperate with other agencies, while at the same time carrying major responsibility for the tasks which are primarily its own.

What the Association Is

The Association is a world federation of national and international bodies concerned with Christian religious education. Fifty-one such units are members of the Association.

The work of the Association is directed by the World Council, and, between meetings of the Council, by the Board of Managers. For convenience, the work is administered by two committees, the British Administrative Committee and the North American Administrative Committee.

Geographically, the Association's interest is in the entire world. Responsibility for service to the different parts of the world is divided between the two administrative committees.

On pages four and five of this pamphlet are a map and a chart which show graphically the nature of the Association, and the divisions of responsibility for service to the fields.

The Association has no standard program to be imposed upon all its constituent agencies. Rather it seeks to aid in developing in each country a program which is indigenous in character. Therefore the emphases of the Association vary with variations in conditions to be met.

The Methods of the Association

In its work of extending and improving Sunday schools and other Christian education forces, the World's Association undertakes:

1. To strengthen its member units and aid them in enlarging their services to their people.
2. To encourage and assist cooperation among church and mission forces in countries having no interdenominational organizations, and when conditions are suitable, to help in forming such organizations.
3. To unite these units in a world fellowship.

In carrying these responsibilities, much of the Association's service is direct to the national and international organizations which are members of it. But much of its service is through denominations and other agencies to the thousands of Sunday schools and churches in many countries.

Membership and Organization of the World's Sunday School Association

ALGERIA—Council on Religious Education in North Africa
ARGENTINA-PARAGUAY-URUGUAY — Confederacion de Iglesias Evangelicas del Rio de la Plata
AUSTRALIA — National Council of Religious Education of Australia
AUSTRIA—Austrian Sunday School Union
BELGIUM — National Committee of Sunday Schools in Belgium
BRAZIL — Conselho de Educacao Religiosa da Confederacao Evangelico de Brazil
BULGARIA — Bulgarian Council of Christian Education
BURMA—Burma Sunday School Union
CANADA — Religious Education Council of Canada
CEYLON—Ceylon Sunday School Union
CHILE—Comision de Educacion Religiosa del Comite Consultor de Cooperacion de Chile
CHINA—National Committee for Christian Religious Education in China
CONGO—Congo Protestant Council
CUBA—Cuba Council of Evangelical Churches
CZECHOSLOVAKIA—Sunday School Association in Czechoslovakia
DENMARK—Danish Sunday School Union
EGYPT-SUDAN — Egypt and Sudan Sunday School Union
ENGLAND-WALES — National Sunday School Union of England and Wales
ESTHONIA—Esthonian Sunday School Union
FINLAND—Evangelical Lutheran Sunday School Association of Finland
Swedish Sunday School Ass'n. of Finland
FRANCE—French Sunday School Union
GERMANY—National Sunday School Association of Germany—Established Church
HUNGARY—Hungarian Sunday School Union
German Free Church Sunday School Ass'n.
INDIA—India Sunday School Union
IRELAND—Sabbath School Society for Ireland
ITALY—Italian Council of Religious Education
JAPAN—National Sunday School Ass'n. of Japan
JUGOSLAVIA—Sunday School Association of Jugoslavia
LATVIA—Latvian Sunday School Union
MADAGASCAR—Madagascar Sunday School Union
MEXICO—Concilio Nacional de Iglesias Evangelicas
NETHERLANDS — Netherlands Sunday School Union
Reformed Sunday School Association
NEW ZEALAND—New Zealand Council of Religious Education
NORWAY—Norwegian Sunday School Union
PALESTINE-SYRIA-TRANSJORDANIA — Bible Lands Union for Christian Education
PERU—Alianza Evangelica de Peru
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS—Philippine Committee of Christian Education
POLAND—Sunday School Association of Poland
PORTUGAL—Portuguese Sunday School Union
PUERTO RICO—Committee on Christian Education, Ass'n. of Evangelical Churches
RUMANIA—Sunday School Council of Rumania
SCOTLAND—Scottish Sunday School Union for Christian Education
THAILAND—National Christian Council of Thailand
SOUTH AFRICA—South African National Sunday School Association
SPAIN—Spanish Sunday School Union
SWEDEN—Swedish Sunday School Council
SWITZERLAND—National Association of Sunday Schools in Switzerland
UNITED STATES - CANADA — International Council of Religious Education

THE WORLD COUNCIL

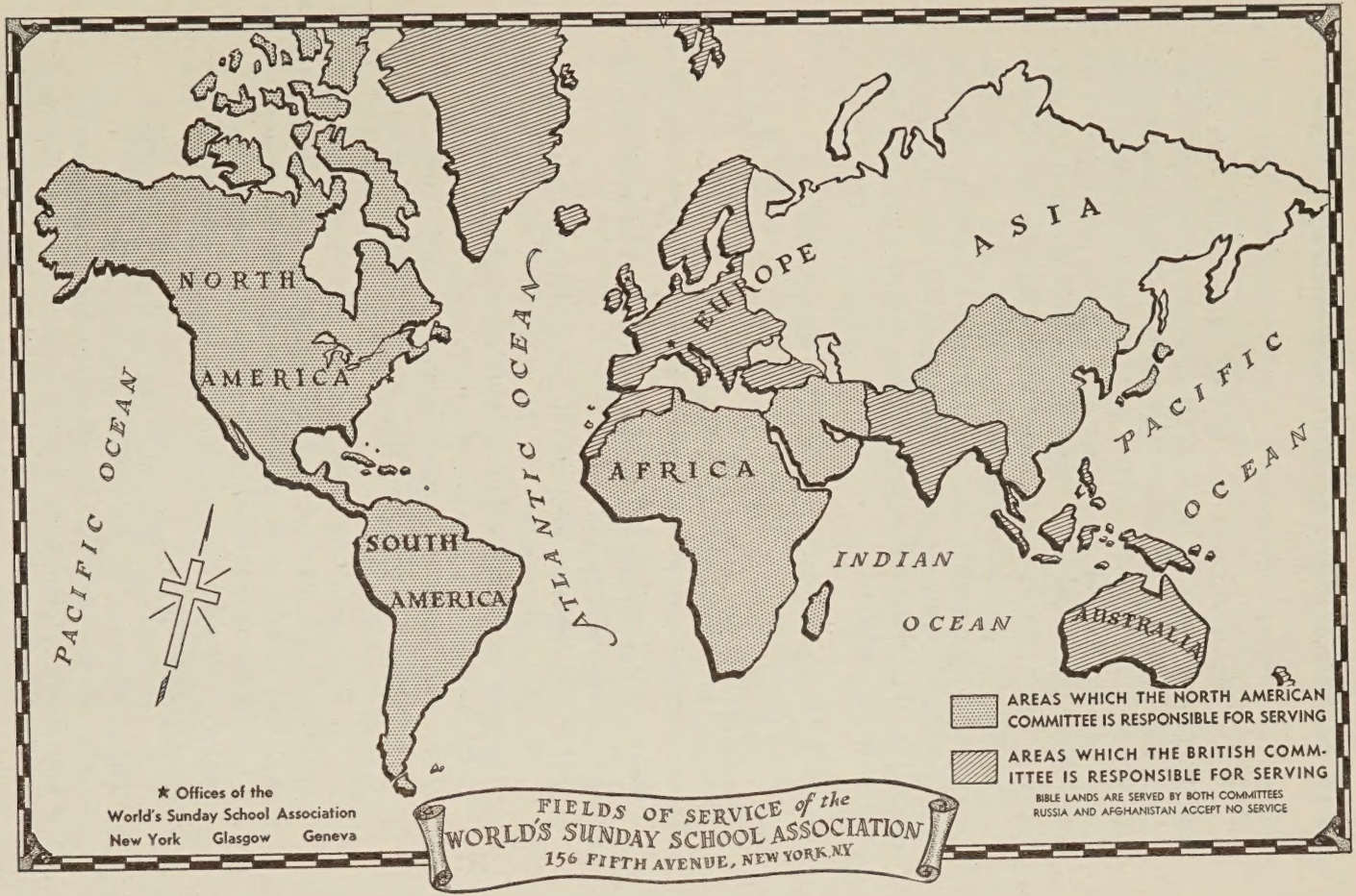
The governing body of the Association. Composed of representatives elected by member organizations, plus a few members at large.

THE NORTH AMERICAN ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

An administrative arm of the World Council, appointed by the World Council. Has five standing sub-committees: Business Committee; Committee on Field Program; Committee on Education of Workers; Committee on Publications; Committee on Curriculum.

THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

An administrative arm of the World Council, appointed by the World Council. Has an Executive Committee and other committees as needed.


NORTH AMERICA
SOUTH AMERICA
EUROPE
ASIA
AFRICA
AUSTRALIA
PACIFIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
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PACIFIC OCEAN
AREAS WHICH THE NORTH AMERICAN COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERVING
AREAS WHICH THE BRITISH COMMITTEE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERVING
BIBLE LANDS ARE SERVED BY BOTH COMMITTEES
RUSSIA AND AFGHANISTAN ACCEPT NO SERVICE
★ Offices of the
World's Sunday School Association
New York Glasgow Geneva
FIELDS OF SERVICE of the
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156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y.

The Relationships of the Association

The Association has friendly relationships with other world agencies which serve the same countries and people. These agencies include the International Missionary Council, the developing World Council of Churches, the World Association of Daily Vacation Bible Schools, and others of a parallel nature. In so far as the Association and these organizations have common interests, the Association stands ready to cooperate in planning and action.

The North American Administrative Committee of the Association has a close working relationship with the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and its committees, and with the International Council of Religious Education, the strongest consitutent unit of the Association.

The Needs to be Met

If the purpose of the Association is to be achieved, the following needs must be met:

1. National leadership in Christian religious education.
2. An understanding of the conditions within the country which bear upon Christian religious education and upon a cooperative program of service.
3. A carefully and democratically formulated program of cooperative service, with such organization as is necessary and practicable.
4. Intelligent supporting interest and participation on the part of both the Christian forces within the country and those which are sending aid into the country.
5. Information regarding the program, the experience, and the best thinking in other countries with reference to religious education.
6. A conscious fellowship among the Christian religious education workers of the different countries.
7. A favorable climate of governmental regulations and public opinion.
8. Resources in money and material.

The Program of the Association

The program of the Association, as administered through the North American Administrative Committee, consists of five major types of enterprises.

1. Developing and strengthening nation-wide cooperative service in all countries.

   a. Selection and education of persons for national leadership.

   b. Field counseling

   c. Financial subsidies.

   d. Surveys.

2. Ensuring the preparatory and continuing education of missionaries and nationals in the field of religious education.

   a. Increasing the opportunities for the preparatory and continuing education of nationals.

   b. Increasing the opportunities for the preparatory and continuing education of missionaries.

   c. The interchange of information through publications.

3. Assisting in developing and distributing literature and other materials for religious education.

   a. Counseling service.

   b. Production of materials which are universally useful.

4. Representing religious education in ecumenical, missionary, governmental, and commercial councils; and representing missionary work in religious education councils.

5. Sponsoring and participating in conventions and other fellowship enterprises, and enlisting international attention on behalf of special emphases.

In reading the elaboration of this outline in the following pages, it should be borne in mind that the Association will cooperate with other agencies wherever cooperation will serve a useful purpose.

II. Strengthening Nation-wide Cooperative Service in All Countries

There is need in practically every country for a network of human channels through which the significant ideas, experiences, impulses, and needs of each of the Christian forces are made known to all the Christian forces.

There is need also of an effective means for enlisting and organizing all the available forces for service in their common interest.

By eliminating duplication of effort through such a division of responsibility as will permit and encourage a measure of specialization by different persons in different aspects of the work, the effectiveness of each of the cooperating agencies can be multiplied.

In many countries, national, interdenominational agencies are meeting these needs. These should be strengthened, and similar agencies should be established in other countries. The World's Sunday School Association may move toward this objective by four types of effort.

a. The selection and education of persons for national leadership.

Probably no other activity has borne and can bear more fruit than this one. Lacking strong national leadership in religious education, there can be only difficult and partial success in cooperative effort among the Christian forces of a country. With strong Christian leadership, the existing resources of all can be efficiently used in the interest of all, and at the same time those resources will be strengthened and expanded.

The procedure for the World's Sunday School Association in the selection and education of persons for national leadership in Christian religious education involves such steps as these: selecting those persons who evidence the greatest potentialities for nation-wide leadership; planning, in cooperation with the persons selected, a program of education which may include work in seminaries and other educational institutions, supplemented by a study of, and in some cases participation in, the work of cooperative enterprises for

religious education in one or more countries beside their own; and aiding in securing the necessary funds. The responsibility of the Association for this procedure will vary with the strength of existing national interdenominational agencies.

b. Field Counseling.

In organized countries, representatives of the Association may be of great assistance through conferences with the officers and members of the national agency, while in unorganized countries, the counseling will begin with selected missionaries and nationals who can exert wide influence.

It is at once evident that, while much counseling may be done by the employed staff of the Association, help is needed from other persons whose services may be secured for temporary periods. These additional persons may be found in many different countries.

c. Financial subsidies.

Financial subsidies, soundly administered, make possible starting and enlarging national, cooperative services in religious education which can move steadily toward independence of outside aid. Such subsidies are necessary in many cases because sufficient local support for permanent maintenance often will come only after considerable successful experience with cooperative and mutually helpful undertakings. The subsidies granted by the Association in the past and present, while not large, have enabled the missionary and native forces to launch and maintain services which otherwise would not have been provided except after long delay.

It is very important at least to double the present total appropriation of the Association for this purpose.

d. Surveys.

A survey of needs, of resources and their distribution, and of related factors is in some cases the most fruitful step toward nation-wide or even international cooperation among Christian forces. The results of such a survey can lift attention from immediate tasks and difficulties to a vision of greater possibilities through broad-gauge, statesmanlike planning and cooperation.

II. *Ensuring the Education of Workers in Christian Religious Education*

Prepared leaders for national and international service are indispensable, but by themselves they can make little progress. In every country there must be many other workers who are skillful in Christian religious education. Included are missionaries, employed nationals—both ordained and lay—and lay persons for whom church and mission work is an avocation.

For each mission field the problem divides itself into three parts.

a. Increasing the opportunities for the preparatory and continuing education of nationals.

Some colleges and seminaries in which nationals secure preparatory preparation for professional Christian service include relatively adequate emphasis upon religious education, and some do not. The World's Sunday School Association is undertaking to find appropriate ways of encouraging all such institutions to meet at least minimum requirements, and of influencing prospective students for Christian service to select those schools which do so.

It is important for these persons not only to have adequate preparatory education with reference to Christian religious education, but also to continue that education while in service. The World's Association will cooperate with its constituent units in finding ways to provide conferences, seminars, library facilities, and extension courses for these workers.

To those nationals of other countries who come to the United States and Canada for study, assistance will be given in the selection of those schools which offer the best opportunities in Christian religious education.

b. Increasing the opportunities for the preparatory and continuing education of missionaries.

As in other countries, some of the colleges and seminaries in the United States and Canada include adequate emphasis

on religious education, and some do not. The World's Sunday School Association will seek suitable ways to encourage these institutions to provide at least the minimum essentials, and, more particularly, will encourage and aid prospective missionaries on furlough to select the schools whose curricula include acceptable attention to religious education.

More extensive use will be made of conferences of from a few days to a few weeks in length. Courses and seminars on religious education for missionaries on furlough, and for nationals of other countries while in the United States and Canada, may be introduced into conferences which serve other but related interests. And in so far as they are needed and resources permit, conferences primarily on religious education will be established to provide concentrated opportunities for the missionaries and nationals to acquaint themselves with the latest and best experience and thinking.

c. The interchange of information through publications.

From several countries has come the urgent suggestion that ways be found to interchange, among all countries, information regarding helpful thinking and experience. Three means of doing so are proposed.

The first is the publication of a quarterly magazine which will contain digests of the best articles and reports on Christian religious education in many countries, with possibly some articles and other materials prepared originally for the magazine.

The second is the occasional issuance of bulletins, each on one specialized aspect of the work. The extent of need for these bulletins may be limited by the nature and success of the digest.

The third is the distribution to all countries of the more valuable materials produced by the agencies of religious education in each country. Such materials will be helpful sources of suggestion for those at the center of the nationwide program of service, and will contribute to a sense of world-wide fellowship in a common task. Obviously, some materials will have to be translated in order to be useful, but this may not be impracticable if only the very best materials are distributed. The crying need for more Christian literature demands that the widest possible use be made of that which is produced.

III. *Assisting in Developing and Distributing Curriculum Materials for Religious Education*

Inspiring progress has been made in the past decade in producing and distributing materials for religious education in the various language and cultural areas of the world, but appalling handicaps there still are due to the lack of suitable materials. For example, there are thousands of Sunday schools for which satisfactory lesson materials are not now available.

In general there are two services which the Association may render.

a. Counseling service.

Assistance may be given in developing plans for the cooperative and indigenous production and distribution of lesson and other materials. The plans in a given instance may be for one country only, or for several countries with homogenous conditions. Curriculum conferences such as have been held in North America and elsewhere in the past are a valuable means of rendering this service.

b. Production of materials which are universally useful.

Variations in language and in some other cultural factors limit, but do not entirely prevent the production of materials which have universal value. Illustrations of types of materials which can be used by all are found in certain pictures and descriptions designed realistically to portray life in specified places and times.

For example, pictures, whether flat or projected, still or moving, of life in Palestine, have universal value. So also do pictures of contemporary life in various other countries when used for the purpose of education for world fellowship.

It has been suggested that ways may be found of reducing expense by centralized production.

IV. *Representing Religious Education and Representing Missionary Work*

The nature of Christian religious education is such that it can be successful only if carried on as an integral part of the total mission of the church. Indeed, some hold that it is co-extensive with the whole church program when that program is educationally conceived. Religious education is certainly indispensable in missionary work, and the purpose of the World's Sunday School Association must be achieved in part through cooperation with other agencies. Moreover, the conditions established by government, and the climate created by commercial interests have a major bearing on the outcome of the Christian religious education program.

On the other hand, religious education is fully Christian only if it is missionary.

These facts suggest five tasks for the Association.

a. Representing religious education in ecumenical circles.

The newest ecumenical agency is the World Council of Churches, now in the process of formation. Indications to date are that the Association, along with other parallel bodies, will have representation in the Assembly of the Council. Clearly, the cause and contribution of religious education must have full recognition in the cooperative planning of ecclesiastical bodies.

b. Representing religious education in missionary councils.

The Association has in times past represented religious education in the International Missionary Council, which is both ecumenical and missionary in nature and purpose, and in the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, and has found itself welcome. Such representation should be extended in the future.

c. Representing religious education in governmental councils.

It is important to secure more freedom for religious education from governmental restrictions. In its efforts in this connection, the Association should cooperate closely with the International Missionary Council.

d. Representing religious education in commercial circles.

The Association can strive to exert a positive influence upon international radio broadcasts from the United States to Latin America, upon motion pictures which are internationally distributed, and upon other commercial enterprises.

e. Representing missionary education in religious education councils.

The close relation of the Association to missionary work on the one side, and to religious education agencies on the other, places it in a strategic position to represent missionary work in religious education councils. And the representation of the missionary cause should be not only in North America, but also in other countries.

V. Sponsoring Conventions and Special Emphases

The Association has an exceptional opportunity to sponsor and participate in conventions and other fellowship enterprises which cross national and racial barriers, and to enlist international attention on behalf of special emphases.

a. Conventions.

For the full period of its history, the Association has made important contributions through world conventions. Such conventions should be continued, their frequency and nature being determined by contemporary conditions.

b. Other fellowship enterprises.

There should be study of the suggestion that the Association take a major part in assisting in the development of world-wide and continental organizations of youth and in holding international conferences of various kinds.

c. Special projects.

From time to time the Association should enlist concerted attention on behalf of projects or aspects of Christian education needing special emphasis.

Certain aspects of education for a more Christian society merit intensive, international emphasis, such as education for international peace, and the problem of the use of beverage alcohol and of narcotics.

Bible study, although an inherent and indissoluble part of Christian religious education, may properly receive exceptional emphasis at certain periods. Said the Madras Conference in one of its findings: "If the Church is to repossess its faith in all its uniqueness and adequacy and power, one indispensable thing demanding special emphasis today is the continuous nourishing of its life upon the Bible. We are bold, therefore, to summon all Christians to a deeper and more consistent study of the Bible. . . . "

What Will the Centuries Say?

Emerson once wrote that the greatest lesson of life is to learn what "the centuries have to say against the hours."

In the present hours there is much in the world to cause discouragement and even despair. But what will the centuries say? That depends. It depends upon the seeds which are sown now and upon the way they are nourished. Are there any seeds more certain to bear the fruit of righteousness than the seeds of Christian truth? This question is fundamental. Is there anything more important to do now for the years and the centuries ahead than to teach children, young people, and adults, the Word of God?

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations"

The World's Sunday School Association is a world-wide agency whose purpose is to extend and improve Christian religious education. It is trying to help in fulfilling the Great Commission. It has rendered significant service in the past, but it must do more.

In the fall of 1939, the Association, through its North American Administrative Committee, decided to make especially careful plans for the future. The wisdom of the decision is evidenced by several facts: The Association's half century of productive effort offers the guidance of valuable experience. The modern Christian religious education movement is well past its initial stages and is now accepted as an essential aspect of the work of the church. There is strong interest in cooperation and unity among world-wide denominational and interdenominational forces. The essentially missionary character of Christianity is being recognized anew. And the importance of strengthening and enlarging the Christian community is being dramatically emphasized by the tragedy of contemporary world events.

The events of recent years have been tragic, but the events of the years to come can be less so. The centuries can have something hopeful to say against the present hours. Will they?

That depends in part upon the Sunday schools, the daily vacation Bible schools, the young people's societies, and other schools of the Christian religion. Their success can be made more certain by the larger program of the World's Sunday School Association. And the success of the Association will be largely determined by its friends.

WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

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